

Locally-grown produce for Senior Meals Program to expand

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In late June, a pilot program that put food on the table of seniors in three counties proved to be successful.

The program initiated by the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department brought New Mexico-grown produce to seniors who generally participate in home-delivered meals and meals at 15 senior centers across three counties in the winter and spring.

The partnership between the ALTSD, Farm to Table, the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association, three county senior services departments, Agricultura Cooperative Network and New Mexico farmers was the inspiration of Sen. Liz Stefanics, D- Bernalillo, Lincoln, San Miguel, Santa Fe, Torrance, Valencia and Rep. Gail Armstrong, R-Catron, Socorro, Valencia.

The 2019 Legislature approved \$50K for the pilot program.

Within seven months the three counties of San Juan, Sandoval, and Socorro were able to purchase and provide \$50K of locally grown produce through their meal programs. And since February they have served 101,800 meals including state-grown produce.

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In addition to providing healthy local food for the state's senior population, the program is expanding business opportunities for New Mexico farmers.

Starting in July ALTSD and its partners plan to expand the New Mexico Grown Fruits and Vegetables for Senior Meals Program.